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Iran Panel Presses to See Reagan White House Is Said To Sidestep Requests For an Interview

By Bob Woodward
Washington Post Staff Writer

The board established by the White House to probe the National Security Council in the wake of the Iran-contra deals is having difficulty setting up an interview with President Reagan. Two requests last week for a formal session with Reagan were carefully sidestepped by White House schedulers, according to administration sources.

Beginning Jan. 9, the day after the president returned to the White House from a hospital stay for prostate surgery, the board has attempted to schedule a Reagan interview, and has been "rebuffed," one source said, because the White House has shifted strategy.

As the Iran-contra affair escalated in November, the board was set up to demonstrate the administration's willingness to be forthright, the sources said. Now the plan is to make sure all the facts are assembled in the complicated affair before the president makes any further comment.

The administration, therefore, has become uncomfortably pinched between two schedules—that of the board, which has less than two weeks to formally report, and that of White House counselor David Abshire, who must assemble all the facts, which could take months.

Reagan has said he would answer questions from the board, which is headed by former senator John G. Tower (R-Tex.), and a White House spokesman yesterday confirmed that a request is pending for a presidential interview and said that the board had been assured it is forthcoming. "The president will meet

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■ Shultz says he was consulted on Iran "talking points." Page A8

U.S. Waives Death For Hijack Suspect *German Businessman Kidnaped in Beirut*

By Howard Kurtz
Washington Post Staff Writer

The U.S. Justice Department, seeking extradition of a suspected Lebanese hijacker arrested in West Germany, agreed yesterday not to ask for the death penalty in the case. In apparent retaliation for the Lebanese suspect's arrest, a pharmaceutical company executive was kidnaped in Beirut, the first West German to be abducted there.

Armed gunmen driving in two cars intercepted the chauffeur-driven car of Hoechst company executive Rudolf Cordes just minutes after he arrived at the airport from Frankfurt at 7:20 p.m. Saturday, security sources in Beirut said.

One car blocked the road, while gunmen leaped out of the other, pulled Cordes out at gunpoint and drove off with him, Washington Post special correspondent Nora Boustany reported from Beirut.

A spokesman for the West German Foreign Ministry in Bonn declined to speculate about the kidnapers' motive, and a West German Embassy official in Beirut said there was "no indication yet of any linkage" between the kidnaping and the arrest of suspected hijacker Mohammed Ali Hamadei.

However, another ministry official in Bonn said privately that it seemed likely from the timing of the abduction that it was linked to Hamadei's arrest. Also, although Americans and other Europeans have been the constant targets of various clandestine Moslem groups, Cordes is the first West German to be kidnaped, despite the relatively large number of West Germans remaining in the Moslem-dominated sector of Beirut.

Hamadei, 22, was arrested at the Frankfurt airport last week after leaving a flight from the Middle East. He was carrying several bottles of highly explosive liquid. Through fingerprint checks, Hamadei was found to be one of four Lebanese men indicted in the United States on charges of participat-



RUDOLF CORDES
... seized along deserted road

ing in the June 1985 TWA hijacking. During the 17-day incident, 39 Americans were held hostage and a Navy diver, Robert D. Stethem of Waldorf, Md., was killed.

"Because this is the only means by which the United States can obtain custody of the suspect, we have agreed to waive requesting imposition of the death penalty in this case," department spokesman Patrick Korten said.

West German officials had said they would not consider the request to send Hamadei to the United States to stand trial unless the death penalty was dropped as a possible punishment. West Germany's constitution forbids the death sentence.

The decision, made by U.S. Attorney General Edwin Meese III and Associate Attorney General Stephen S. Trott, was to be relayed to West German authorities yesterday, Korten said. He said that under U.S. legal procedures, a federal judge would not impose the death penalty if it is not sought by government prosecutors.

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South African Rebels Seek Wider Base *Outlawed ANC, in Policy Shift, Emphasizes Appeal to Whites*

By Allister Sparks
Special to The Washington Post

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under the state of emergency declared last June is at last restoring a quiet to the rebellious townships. Thousands of community

could last a year or more before the next crisis sends it to new heights.

ANC is head-